

entire road from Interstate 95 through Dover will have cost almost \$800 million.

"The traffic flow between southern and northern Delaware will improve tremendously with this opening," Delaware Department of Transportation spokesman Mike Williams said. "The drive to the beach will be faster and much less stressful."

About 60,000 cars a day clog U.S. 13 between the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal and Odessa, slowed by traffic signals and turning vehicles. During the summer, beach and Dover-bound NASCAR traffic can make the drive frustrating and tediously slow.

That's why in the 1980s state highway planners conceived Del. 1 as Delaware's transportation jewel. The north-south route was designed to quickly whisk people along the length of the state. U.S. 13 would be left for local traffic.

But the cost has been high.

The Mainline section of Del. 1 around Dover had a price tag of \$140 million, \$17.5 million over budget.

The Odessa bypass, originally bid at \$88.3 million, cost \$98.7 million. About half of the overruns come from adding electronic tolls and building ramps that will allow motorists to avoid the tolls by exiting onto U.S. 13 south of the canal.

The new ramps were added after efforts to save the St. Georges Bridge collapsed. The ramps will allow Delaware to meet its obligation under federal law to provide passage over the canal.

DelDOT also spent about \$6.2 million to buy 45 parcels of land for the Odessa bypass. Agreements still haven't been reached on five of the properties.

The bypass will open in three phases. During the week of Sept. 13, southbound lanes will open; in mid-October, northbound lanes will open; and on Nov. 15, the state will begin collecting tolls.

Throughout the three phases, lane restrictions and adjustments will be made to U.S. 13.

Highway engineers hope the phased opening will gradually reduce traffic on U.S. 13, allowing crews to restore the old highway.

"The more people who take advantage of the free travel on Del. 1, the sooner we'll be done with everything," said David Duke, DelDOT's resident engineer on the project.

While the scheduled opening will not help beach traffic much this year, it will ease the flow of traffic for the next big NASCAR weekend Sept. 24-26.

"It's about time," said Marol Michael of Carlisle, Pa. Michael has been driving U.S. 13 for years on regular pilgrimages to Rehoboth Beach.

"It's a bad road, there are too many lights and too much traffic," Michael said Friday as he headed to the beach. "I'll be happy to pay \$1 to avoid this."

While the bypass opening can't come soon

enough for some motorists, some southern New Castle County residents dread it.

"That's not good for me," said Nick Cusatis, who owns NRS Racing off southbound U.S. 13 in Odessa.

The relief route threatens to take away much of his NASCAR business for the September races.

"We figured we could get one last bang, and then maybe think about relocating," said Cusatis, who said his shop can bring in more than \$40,000 on a race weekend.

Other U.S. 13 business owners seem to be taking the news in stride.

Pam Hernandez, manager of a Conoco filling station in Odessa, thinks her business will recover.

"We'll maybe feel it initially," said Hernandez, whose store — especially in the summer — often looks like a shopping mall as cars and trucks try to jockey their way into the parking lot. "But I think after the novelty of the new road wears off, [business] will pick back up."

"But, I could be wrong," Hernandez added.

Residents along U.S. 13 are concerned the flow of motorists avoiding the tolls will overtax U.S. 13.

Charles Andrews operates an upholstery shop on Old U.S. 13 just south of Odessa. Southbound U.S. 13 traffic will be rerouted under Del. 1 onto the two-lane old U.S. 13 in front of his shop.

"There's next to no traffic now, which is all I think this road can handle," Andrews said, as cars gently hummed by in the distance.

"I think it's insane. They're going to create a tremendous traffic problem," Andrews said. "They act like no one is going to use old 13 once the 'wonder road' opens."

Residents living near the north end of the bypass have similar concerns.

"I think there are going to be major traffic jams, especially on the weekends," said Airmont resident Andy Whisnant. "A lot of the people that go to the beach just ain't gonna pay a toll."

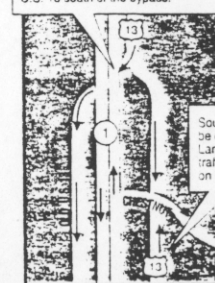
Del. 1 openings

The Odessa bypass will open in three phases:

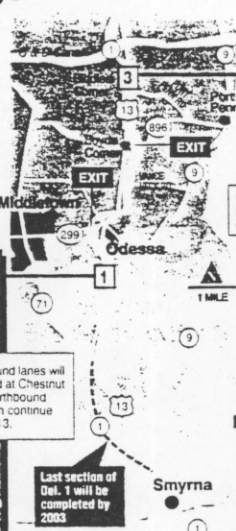
Phase 1: the week of Sept. 13

- All southbound traffic crossing the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal bridge will be diverted onto the bypass. Motorists can ride the length of the bypass or exit onto U.S. 13 at Boyds Corner or Del. 299 in Odessa.
- The existing southbound lanes of U.S. 13 will end at Chestnut Lane south of Odessa. They will not re-open until 2003.

Southbound traffic will be funneled into one lane and be routed under Del. 1 and onto old U.S. 13. The nationwide detour will allow traffic to rejoin U.S. 13 south of the bypass.



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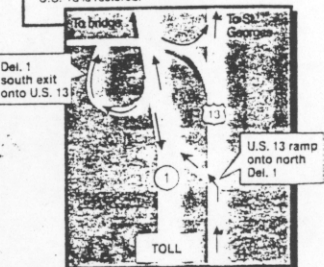


2 Phase 2: Mid-October

- Northbound lanes of Del. 1 open.
- Motorists traveling north from Smyrna will be able to exit onto U.S. 13 before reaching the bypass.

Phase 3: Nov. 15

- The two exits for local traffic and for motorists wishing to avoid the toll road open: Del. 1 south exit onto U.S. 13, and U.S. 13 ramp onto north Del. 1.
- For a few weeks after Del. 1 opens, U.S. 13 will occasionally be limited to one lane in each direction north of Biddies Corner while the 1995 alignment of U.S. 13 is restored.



Bypass facts:

- Construction bid: \$88,327,872.33
- Actual cost: \$98,732,075.22
- Land cost: \$6,238,011
- Amount of dirt moved: 4,979,001 cubic yards
- Amount of concrete used: 225,159 yards
- Amount of steel used: 7,916,456 pounds
- Number of street lights: 285
- Length of elevated roadway: 5,881 feet

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Dave Duke (left), resident engineer for DelDOT, at the end of June talks over plans with Dave Crow, lead engineer, at the Del. 1 bypass in Odessa.